

Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Chaos in the Littorals

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MARITIME PREPOSITIONING FORCE 2010  
AND CHAOS IN THE LITTORALS

by

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## ABSTRACT

With the end of the Cold War each of the armed services faces a daunting task. How to develop relevant operational concepts for dealing with threats, the nature of which is not certain yet? A pessimistic, almost apocalyptic, vision of the future has been chosen by the Marine Corps in its capstone operational concept, *Operational Maneuver from the Sea* forecasting "chaos in the littorals" and the "worldwide breakdown of order." *Operational Maneuver from the Sea* envisions the application of maneuver warfare principles to amphibious operations. The capabilities required for the key component of the force structure to implement this concept, 'Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond', are currently being formulated. The force it would replace is a carryover from the Cold War which was adapted for the dual major regional conflict national security strategy.

The Marine Corps approach to 'Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond' lacks rigor, ignoring futures other than the "chaos in the littorals" which is its focus. The original idea for this research was to determine how relevant such a force would be if the future were to turn out differently from the "worldwide breakdown of order." Four widely held scenarios, to include that in *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, were examined.

What surfaced, however, was not a problem adapting MPF 2010 to other threat environments. "Chaos in the littorals" indeed looks like the shape of things to come. The problem turned out to be the lack of a coherent link between the increasing frequency of what are now called "smaller scale contingencies" and MPF 2010's requirement for "revolutionizing forcible entry operations." The Marine Corps' forecast of the future looks fairly accurate, but the MPF 2010 concept is ill-suited for that environment.

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ABSTRACT

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## CHAPTER ONE

### PROLOGUE

#### **Two Promising Starts: A Cautionary Tale**

"The title of my research project is *Interwar Operational Military Effectiveness: History Repeats Itself*" The lieutenant colonel was standing before his war college conference group, delivering the oral defense for his research project. "I will compare the experience of the British Army between the First and Second World Wars with that of the United States Marine Corps between the Persian Gulf War and the Defense Reorganization Act of 2012. Following World War I visionaries in the British Army, Liddell Hart prominent among them, experimented with mechanized warfare and the potential for massed armored formations to break the operational stalemate of trench warfare which had frustrated the generals on the Western Front.

The armored idea in Britain, however, was stillborn. Their army failed to follow up on a promising start. Instead, it reverted to its prewar role as a light, expeditionary force suited for handling troublespots throughout the British Empire.

It was left to the German Army to fully develop Hart's ideas on armored warfare. Lutz and Guderian created a new type of force based on this incipient operational concept. At the beginning of World War II the British Army found itself on the continent defending its ally, France, but was ill-prepared for continental warfare. In a sense they were destroyed by their own creation at Dunkirk as the Germans integrated aircraft, armored formations and radio communications into a hard hitting combined arms force.

What we see here on the part of the British was what some would later call an ambivalent attitude toward the "introduction of technology into operational conceptions" and a resistance to

restructure its forces to accommodate a new arm.<sup>1</sup> The leadership refused to create more tank battalions or stand down any cavalry regiments. It was institutional constraints, at least in part, that prevented the British Army from acting upon revolutionary changes in the nature of war, which had been manifest since the later phases of the First World War with the appearance of the tank.

The negative example of the American Marine Corps is also instructive. In the late 1990's, under their Commandant, General Krulak, they experimented with what was then a new method of warfare. It involved an "innovation process" which experimented with highly dispersed small units capable of attacking the enemy with precise, lethal fires from remote locations on a battlefield lacking traditional front lines. This process, which they called *Sea Dragon*, did not survive the passing of the Krulak Commandancy. Following numerous problems in applying *Sea Dragon* to urban warfare and facing budget deficits from unanticipated contingency operations of over three billion in 2011 dollars, Krulak's successor postponed the last phase. He later canceled the entire experiment. Its critics asserted that *Sea Dragon* represented military innovation at its worst, a process which consumed scarce resources with little payoff.

It was the U.S. Army in this second case study which picked up where *Sea Dragon* left off. Their army took the concept, which they renamed *Agile Dragon*, and incorporated it into their own adaptation process, called *Force XXI*, in the *Army After Next* wargames. It was the U.S. Army which solved the urban operations problems and applied this style of warfare on a scale beyond that of just a battalion-sized task force. A major part of *Force XXI* was the *Army*

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<sup>1</sup> Allan R. Millet and Williamson Murray, Military Effectiveness, volume 2, (Boston: Allen and Unwin: 1987), p.113.

*from the Sea* concept. Its centerpiece was the Projection Prepositioning Force Squadrons with their ultrafast intratheater transport ships (UFITS). In the CINCs' minds the maritime prepositioning force was relegated to an "also ran" status as a strategic deployment option.

As a result, the Marine Corps was never fully funded for a follow-on concept for its maritime prepositioning force and was unable to sufficiently recapitalize the aging ships and equipment. The Army was left as the sole deployer of large-scale sustainable expeditionary forces. The Marine Corps had only the smaller-scale forcible entry and crisis response functions."

The speaker paused for effect and concluded, "The Marine Corps' operational effectiveness in the interwar period was hampered, like the British, by attachments to the tried and true doctrine and force structure of the past."

## CHAPTER TWO

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Existential Dilemma: Why MPF matters**

This fictional account in the prologue may seem alarmist, especially given the nervous state of interservice relations and palpable angst over the prospect of recommendations for further force structure reductions by the Quadrennial Defense Review. Its plausibility, however, highlights the Marine Corps' existential dilemma since the end of World War II. How does this service justify its congressionally mandated multiple division-wing structure on the basis of its statutory responsibility for land operations supporting naval campaigns? As amphibious lift dried up after the Korean War, division-sized amphibious landings became an anachronism. The Marine Corps was left with the provision of its "such other duties as the president may direct" mission of fighting along side the Army in continental operations, which was essentially its function in Vietnam.

What service would want to base the existence of its largest units on a collateral function? And even if these units' futures were secure solely on the basis of the goodwill of Congress without a *raison d'etre*, there is the issue of relevance, that of developing operational capabilities which provide some utility to the National Command Authorities. After Vietnam the Marine Corps carved out a competency in an area ceded by the Army. The Army went unchallenged in heavy and light forces. The Marine Corps saw an unoccupied middle ground of providing forces which were light enough to be expeditionary but heavy enough to sustain themselves for an extended period of time.



Maritime prepositioning squadrons<sup>2</sup> are the critical link between the forcible entry capability resident in the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)<sup>3</sup> and that of sustained operations in the much larger Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)<sup>4</sup>. Without the maritime prepositioning squadrons the MEF becomes another competitor for scarce airlift and shipping in a crisis. Take away the maritime prepositioning ships from the Marine Corps, and its MEFs start to look like just a source for small forward deployed crisis response forces such as MEUs or Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Forces (SPMAGTFs). The question then arises, "What does the nation really get for these three divisions and three wings?" If the answer is three forward deployed MEUs and something that looks like a second land army that cannot get to the fight, then some might question whether or not it makes sense.

As it is, maritime prepositioning promises the Marine Corps an assured role in the uncertain climate of budgetary constraints as "niche forces," those tailored for a single, limited application, are targeted in force reductions. Out of all the assets that the Marine Corps brings to the table, only the maritime prepositioning squadrons give the service the wherewithal to provide forces useful across the broad spectrum of missions. Maritime prepositioning forces<sup>5</sup> have been employed by CINCs and joint task force commanders in humanitarian assistance operations, for crisis response, and for wartime power projection.

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<sup>2</sup> A group of civilian-owned and civilian-crewed ships chartered by the Military Sealift Command loaded with prepositioned equipment and 30 days of supplies to support a MAGTF of up to 17,300 men in size.

<sup>3</sup> The Marine Expeditionary Unit is a task organization that is normally built around a battalion landing team, composite helicopter squadron, and logistics support unit. It fulfills routine forward afloat deployment requirements, and is capable of relatively limited combat operations.

<sup>4</sup> The Marine Expeditionary Force is normally built around a division-wing team, but can include more than one division or aircraft wing, together with an appropriate combat service support organization. The MEF is capable of conducting a wide range of amphibious assault operations and sustained operations ashore.

<sup>5</sup> A maritime prepositioning force is a task organization of units under one commander formed for the purpose of introducing a MAGTF and its associated equipment and supplies into a secure area.

## The Problem

The smoke from the collapse of the iron curtain has not completely cleared yet. The shapes of future threats are starting to come into focus but are barely discernible. The exact composition of the scene is still not recognizable. To confuse the issue further, there is no shortage of oracles with competing forecasts of what this scene will look like. And yet, in this climate of uncertainty, decisions have to be made, the consequences of which the services will have to live with for the next forty, or possibly fifty years.

The Marine Corps has made a stab at what the threat environment of the future will look like. Not surprisingly, it is a future that plays to the Marine Corps' strengths, and one in which its forces would occupy center stage. The leitmotif chosen for this danger on the horizon is called, "chaos in the littorals." This new world will be characterized by "the clash of the myriad forces of national aspiration, religious intolerance, and ethnic hatred."<sup>6</sup> Has the Marine Corps embraced Huntington's thesis in *The Clash of Civilizations* but with his cultural fault lines, shifted conveniently close to the shore and his flash points scaled down to manageable Marine Expeditionary Force-sized proportions? Although cautiously hedging its bet on the possibility of the continued threat of major regional conflicts or the rapid rise of another superpower, "the most obvious challenge" in this view is "the worldwide breakdown of order."<sup>7</sup> The description of this chaotic environment as a war of "all against all" is presumably a conscious choice of words meant to associate the new threat with the Hobbesian state of nature in Leviathan. This conjures up a world more closely resembling the dark, apocalyptic vision of Robert D. Kaplan in his

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<sup>6</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Operational Maneuver From the Sea: A Concept for the Projection of Naval Power Ashore*, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

controversial *Atlantic Monthly* article and subsequent book.<sup>8</sup> His disturbing account predicted the spread of tribal violence, forced ethnic migrations, and failed states in the developing world. It is into this world where life on the littorals is "nasty, brutish, and short" that the capability to project naval power ashore will ostensibly be not only relevant but central.

*Operational Maneuver From the Sea*, hereafter referred to as *OMFTS*, prudently warns that "it is imperative that the Marine Corps resist the temptation to prepare only for one conflict."<sup>9</sup> Given that the course, or at least the cardinal direction, to the future has been set with *OMFTS*, it is somewhat disingenuous then to caution against focusing on the threat it identifies. The requirements to conduct *OMFTS* are well under construction in a number of projects being conducted under the rubric of Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010. Preliminary assessments from these projects are already driving weapons acquisition and doctrine development. While the Marine Corps is not exactly preparing for only one conflict, it is beginning to organize, train, and equip itself for a defined arena in a manner which may limit its options in the future.

The problem for the Marine Corps is what happens if it gets it wrong. What happens if the world in 2010 and beyond does not look like "chaos in the littorals" but more like something else? Theoretical constructs like *OMFTS* can be eliminated and replaced in a short period of time. Force structure, and to a greater degree the equipment that supports it, cannot. The weapons and equipment bought today can remain in the inventory for forty years. The stakes of getting it right the first time are high. This is especially true if one aggregation of that equipment, as is the case with the maritime prepositioning force, is the critical link which enables

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<sup>8</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994 and *The Ends of the Earth*, Random House, 1996..

<sup>9</sup> Op.Cit., (document not paginated)

a service to perform its most challenging primary function and provides the strongest justification for the largest units of its force structure.

Is Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010, in its present conceptual state, flexible enough to handle futures other than the one for which it was conceived? Are there scenarios in which Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 would be poorly suited? And assuming that this analysis reveals any deficiencies, what changes can be implemented now to correct them?

### **Methodology: Three Options, Four Futures**

The maritime prepositioning force came into its present configuration well before the advent of Operational Maneuver from the Sea. Even with the extensive enhancements planned in the interim, it will not be capable of the operations envisioned in the new concept. "A cursory application of OMFTS principles," in the view of a recent assessment "indicates that the current MPSs (maritime prepositioning squadrons) are ill equipped to handle the expected demands."<sup>10</sup>

Faced with potential deficiencies, the Marine Corps finds itself in an ideal position to rethink the entire maritime propositioning concept. The fielding of the MV-22 Osprey and the advanced amphibious assault vehicle (AAAV) is on the horizon. The leases will expire in 2009 and 2011 on the current fleet of maritime propositioning ships. There is the opportunity, if necessary, to build from scratch a new force tailored not for the threat environment of the 1980s or 1990s but for 2010. The Marine Corps understandably is attempting to acquire a force adapted specifically for Operational Maneuver from the Sea.

The methodology of this paper will be to examine the utility of the Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 in its evolving conceptual state in four futures to include

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<sup>10</sup> SRA International, "Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force Capabilities Assessment Project," September 1996, Executive Summary Page.

"chaos in the littorals." The concept for 2010 will be compared in each case with two other options: that of staying with the soon to be completed enhanced maritime prepositioning force by purchasing or rechartering the ships when the leases expire, or that of developing a new concept more relevant to the requirements of that future. The conclusion will attempt to ascertain the likely shape of the successor to the Maritime Prepositioning Force, already dubbed "Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond."

This analysis, however, requires a preliminary description of the maritime prepositioning squadrons and their recent employment. A full understanding of the limitations of the maritime prepositioning ships and their predecessors is imperative for comprehending the Marine Corps' rationale for 2010's new quasi-amphibious assault capability. The difference between the current maritime prepositioning force and its predecessors also provides a reference for how far apart '2010 and Beyond' might be from today's force.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MPF ORIGINS AND CASE STUDIES

#### **Creation of the Maritime P repositioning Force**

The maritime prepositioning force is a carryover from the Cold War which was subsequently adapted for the dual major regional conflict national security strategy under review. The Carter Administration established the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) in response to the threat to Iran posed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The RDJTF was the teeth of the "Carter Doctrine" which declared the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to be a vital interest. The Navy's and Marine Corps' deficiencies in strategic reach were laid bare that same year during the aborted Iranian hostage rescue attempt. The solution to the problem of deploying powerful forces to the region was the prepositioning of unit equipment on ships overseas.

In the middle 1980s this effort grew from the Near Term Prepositioning Force, a flotilla of converted ships at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, to its present form of the maritime prepositioning force. This force met the requirement for swift and powerful response to a crisis by a sizable force. It was built around thirteen maritime prepositioning ships organized into three squadrons or MPSRONS (maritime prepositioning squadrons) and strategically based near potential trouble spots. MPSRON-1 is based in the Mediterranean, MPSRON-2 in the Indian Ocean at Diego Garcia, and MPSRON-3 at Guam.

The ships, however, are not naval vessels. They are privately owned and under charter to the Navy. Civilian seamen are contracted to operate the ships under the auspices of the Military Sealift Command.<sup>11</sup> The leases on the ships are scheduled to expire in 2009 and 2011.

The ships can unload onto piers in a host nation's ports or by what is called "in-stream." Their roll-on/roll-off ramps facilitate rapid offloading of tracked and wheeled vehicles. The in-stream method is used when faced with minimal or non-existent port facilities. It involves hoisting the equipment using the ship's own cranes onto self-propelled barges called lighters which are actually carried right aboard the ship. These craft then beach themselves, and the cargo is transported using rough terrain container handlers, special forklift-type vehicles, which arrive in the initial wave. In a benign, secure environment the ship can discharge its cargo while still several miles offshore.

Each of the three squadrons carries the bulk of the equipment and supplies to support what was formerly known as a Marine Expeditionary Brigade<sup>12</sup>, now referred to as a Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). In a crisis the Marines and selected equipment, comprising the fly-in echelon (FIE), are airlifted into the theater in about 249 aircraft sorties to rendezvous with the ships at an adequate port and airfield complex. The fixed wing aircraft and helicopters of the air combat element (ACE) would self deploy, flying into a secure airfield. Without the maritime prepositioning ships it would require about 3,000 sorties to deploy this 17,300 man force into theater with its first thirty days of supplies.

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<sup>11</sup> "Secretary of the Navy Names Ship after Medal of Honor Recipient," News Release (Washington, D.C., Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, 15 March 1995), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> A Marine Expeditionary Brigade was a task organization that was normally built around a regimental landing team, provisional Marine aircraft group, and a logistics support group. A task force this size is capable of conducting amphibious assault operations of limited scope.

Prior to the Gulf War the equipment and supplies aboard the ships were uniformly loaded with each ship having approximately the same "manifest." This was done to minimize the effect that the loss of one ship might have if the majority of one item of equipment, for example the previously mentioned rough terrain container handlers, had all been aboard that vessel. For a full squadron offload in a major regional conflict, this was the overriding consideration.

After the war the squadrons were reloaded in configurations better designed for lesser contingencies. There are two and three ship "modules" for smaller task forces. It is also possible to selectively offload equipment and supplies for a smaller, Marine Expeditionary Unit sized MAGTF.

The Marine Corps has plans underway to expand the current Maritime Prepositioning Force by three ships, one to each squadron. These new ships will carry equipment to build an expeditionary airfield, a command and control suite to support joint task force operations, a fleet hospital, as well as equipment required to support a naval construction battalion and perform repairs on armored vehicles.<sup>13</sup> These plans will be discussed in more detail later under the Enhanced Maritime Prepositioning Force.

### **Prepositioned Forces and Crisis Response: Case Studies**

The employment of the maritime prepositioning force during Desert Shield was generally viewed as a bright spot in the performance of the Military Sealift Command. Two of the MPSRONs were offloaded in August following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, and the third was ordered to the theater in November. The tanks off of the first two squadrons of

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<sup>13</sup> "Key Support for Extra Sealift," *Navy Times*, 20 March 1995, p. 28.



maritime prepositioning ships comprised the main armored force in the theater until late September 1990.

After the Gulf War the maritime prepositioning ships from both services were used in Somalia during the humanitarian relief and peacekeeping operations there. Maritime prepositioning ships embarked their offload preparation party and arrived off Somalia eight days after the execution order from the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Operation Restore Hope. The four ships provided the first thirty days of sustainment to include food, fuel and water for the 12,000 Marines taking part in the operation.

The ships provided 1,575,000 gallons of potable water while at anchor off the Somali coast until other water production means were established and wells were dug.<sup>14</sup> After their cargo was offloaded in Somalia, the ships served as freighters, making shuttle runs between Mombasa and Mogadishu. The command and control equipment aboard the vessels even allowed them to be used to serve as port control, coordinating ship movements in and out of Mogadishu.

They also were used as flexible deterrent options in response to Saddam Hussein's troop moves in October 1994 and October 1995. On Saturday, 8 October 1994 the news broke that President Clinton was dispatching U.S. forces to the Gulf in response to Iraqi troop movements near the Kuwaiti border.<sup>15</sup> It was reported that "One of the most important steps the Pentagon took was to order maritime prepositioning ships, huge floating warehouses based at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, to set sail for the Gulf."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Naval Message, CINCPACFLEET P 130538Z MAR 93, p. 1 of 1.

<sup>15</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Sends Force as Iraqi Soldiers Threaten Kuwait," *New York Times*, 8 October 1994, p.1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

MPSRON-2 sailed to ports in Saudi Arabia during the crisis. Concurrently, the First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) units designated for MPSRON-2 were placed on alert. By the time the ships were arriving in force from 17 to 19 November, the Iraqi armor units had pulled back and the crisis was winding down. The Iraqi withdrawal obviated the need to actually deploy the I MEF units, but the potential to do so provided the combatant CTNC with the capability to respond with a credible force.

Maritime prepositioning ships have also been used in domestic disaster relief operations. The water production systems aboard the ships that were workhorses during Operation Restore Hope in Somalia were just as valuable after hurricanes in the Pacific. Each vessel can store over 85,000 gallons of water and can produce more potable water using reverse osmosis equipment.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE FUTURE OF MARITIME PREPOSITIONING

The Gulf War revealed some shortcomings of the maritime prepositioning force. A congressionally mandated Mobility Requirements Study (MRS) analyzed these deficiencies after the war and noted the glaring inadequacy in armored forces for scenarios such as that in Southwest Asia. At the start of the war, there were only ninety tanks prepositioned, thirty in each squadron. The MRS recommended increasing the total to 120.

The deployment of maritime prepositioning ships to Somalia for Operation RESTORE HOPE revealed additional deficiencies, especially in the area of heavy engineer support required for operation areas with poor infrastructure and sparse facilities. The need for prepositioned equipment for the naval construction force (NCF) of the MAGTF was identified.

As discussed previously, the Marine Corps is adding three ships, one to each squadron to forward deploy the important capabilities of constructing an expeditionary airfield, a fleet hospital, the command and control suite for a joint task force headquarters, naval construction battalion equipment, and repair of armored forces.

#### **A Muscular MPF 2010: "Kicking the door in a little bit"**

Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 is difficult to conceptualize in concrete terms. Thus far it is more a set of requirements than even a hypothetical squadron of ships. Even what does exist in desired capabilities is dynamic and hard to pin down.

Lieutenant General James L. Jones, the former Marine Corps Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policy, and Operations articulated the general nature of these capabilities in an interview with *Navy Times* last fall. In making his case to regional CINCs he championed the maritime

prepositioning force as a crisis response option rather than just a logistics asset. Stating that "maritime prepositioning isn't just bringing ships stocked with war gear closer to the foxhole," he maintained that it should be thought of as "ARGs (amphibious ready groups) without the sailors or the Marines."<sup>17</sup> In comparing it to an amphibious ready group he hinted at the two new roles he envisioned, first "prepositioning ships will virtually shadow amphibious ready groups deploying with Marine expeditionary units," and second, its future employment "in those instances where maybe you have to kick the door in a little bit."<sup>18</sup>

The Marine Corps has been grappling with the question of what capabilities would be required for the maritime prepositioning force to follow immediately behind a Marine Expeditionary Unit executing a forcible entry operation, bolstering its combat power. And what would it need to act independently, conducting a landing of its own in a less than benign environment? The *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond* concept is the Marine Corps latest attempt to answer these issues.

### **Overcoming Limitations**

The Near Term Prepositioning Force (NTPF), MPF's predecessor, had three requirements which limited its employment: a port facility with berthing spaces for pierside offload, an airfield for both strategic airlift and the fly-in echelon, and a large tactical assembly area ashore where the ground combat element and combat service support element could marry up with their equipment. The embarkation of lighters on the maritime prepositioning ships, which permitted in-stream offload, eliminated the requirement for a port facility. The current addition of an expeditionary airfield (EM) set for the enhanced maritime prepositioning force will give the

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<sup>17</sup> Interview by Gidget Fuentes, "A Floating Dump? Think Again," *Navy Times*, November 4, 1997, p.25.  
<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

CINC the option of landing at secure locations without an established airfield. Without this capability an adversary could predict likely maritime prepositioning force offload sites by analyzing known locations of suitable airfields adjacent to beaches with protection, gradients and composition which permit lighterage to offload. A potential enemy facing a maritime prepositioning force with an organic EAF capability would have to defend against a greater number of landing sites.

The last major limitation preventing participation in amphibious operations is the need for a tactical assembly area on land. Even the enhanced maritime prepositioning squadrons cannot receive troops onboard their ships which have accommodations for only the offload preparation party (OPP). Average offload times are still measured in days. For a full squadron pierside offload, the best case is four days if a berthing space is available for each ship.<sup>19</sup> The same offload conducted in-stream with only a sixty minute one-way transit time from the ship to the beach would take seven and a half days.<sup>20</sup> A week-long offload in a tactical assembly area is an inviting target for enemy fires. Solving the problem requires an arrival and assembly at sea capability and then, once troops are aboard, the wherewithal to offload them in a tactical manner.

While the Marine Corps is reluctant at this point to venture as to what this new capability would actually look like, there have been some attempts to flesh out the concept. In his November 1994 *Proceedings* article, Major Jon T. Hoffman focused on the vulnerability of the tactical assembly area to enemy missile attacks and came up with an alternative. He noted that the assembly area problem was exacerbated by most ports and airfields being located near urban

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<sup>19</sup> John S. Ivancovich, "Analysis of a Full Maritime Prepositioning Squadron Offload," *CNA Field Memorandum* 95-1122, 15 February 1995, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

areas which worsened the force protection difficulties. Based on the increased future likelihood of "littoral warfare and brushfire contingencies," he proposed the concept where "the troops could marry up with the ships at sea and conduct a tactical offload over a beach."<sup>21</sup> He saw this capability as overcoming the inherent weakness of the maritime prepositioning force by giving the commander the ability to select his landing site from a wider stretch of coastline, and by providing a unit that was ready to fight upon offload.

The centerpiece for this concept would be a new type of combat loaded RO/RO ship with a well deck and LCACs. Unlike amphibious ships, these vessels would not have berthing or messing facilities for troops. This function would be performed by a transport ship in each squadron which would have the characteristics of a fast ocean liner. The third component of this tactical maritime prepositioning squadron would be an aviation platform with a permanently embarked air combat element with "an appropriate mix of helicopters and V-22s."<sup>22</sup>

Hoffman envisioned a hypothetical scenario where the cargo ships and aviation ship sortie in response to a crisis while the troops associated with the equipment fly to the squadrons port, such as Diego Garcia, and embark on the transport vessel. He would then have the troops "transfer from the transport to the cargo ships, where they would fall in on their equipment."<sup>23</sup> The tactical maritime prepositioning squadron would then offload at a location of the commander's choosing. Hoffman's proposal for "robust offloading capabilities" highlights another requirement for Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010, that of supporting air cushioned landing craft and assault amphibians which de facto necessitates a ship with a well deck.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Major Jon T. Hoffman, USMCR, "Fustest With the Mostest," *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1994, p.40.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond* (Draft), 1997, p. 9.

As attractive as acquiring this capability might be for the Marine Corps, it must be recognized that it may come at a price. There is a strong distaste in Congress today for expensive "platforms." There is always the possibility, if not the near certainty, that if the Marine Corps decides to "trade up" to MPF 2010, they will get fewer ships or squadrons, or both.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ALTERNATE FUTURES

Four widely held alternative futures, to include the Marine Corps' "chaos in the littorals" will be examined. After a brief discussion of each scenario, the three options discussed previously will be weighed. Briefly, these are: renew the leases on the maritime prepositioning ships in the current force, replace the force with new ships capable of assembly at sea and tactical offload in a non-benign environment or develop a new concept for Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010. The capabilities inherent in Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 will be analyzed in this context to ascertain its utility, deficiencies, and excess capability. What a new concept might look like will also be discussed in each case.

#### **Noncombat Functions**

For the sake of intellectual rigor it is necessary to at least consider the remote likelihood that the U.S. military's future role lies primarily in noncombat functions. The most recent National Security Strategy formally calls upon the military to accomplish five missions, two of which are peace operations and an eclectic set of tasks commonly referred to as "domestic support." This last mission includes counterterrorism efforts, fighting narcotrafficking, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. Although most would consider this future far fetched, there is a respected body of literature which examines this possibility.

The most widely circulated work in this regard is perhaps *The Origins of the American Coup of 2012*. This fictional account warned against the diversion of the military's attention, specifically a "[p]reoccupation with humanitarian missions, narcotics interdiction, and all the rest



of the ancillary and nontraditional missions."<sup>25</sup> While the author's main purpose was to alert his audience to what he perceived as the dangers of politicizing the military through encouraging it to focus on domestic enterprises, his work pointed toward a future where the threats to American security from domestic and international terrorism, narcotrafficking, and natural disasters would far outweigh those from regional contingencies or a rising superpower.

It is fairly intuitive that the additional cost of an assembly at sea capability for three tank heavy 17,000 man MAGTFs looks like a bad investment in this scenario. In fact, the enhanced maritime prepositioning forces looks like overkill.

What might a maritime prepositioning force look like designed primarily for disaster relief with traditional military missions being secondary? If ships are to be deployed separately the present size is about right. Each one carries about a reinforced battalion's supplies and equipment. A battalion is the smallest Marine unit with a logistics staff and should be the baseline unit for these contingencies.

One proposal might be a two-ship squadron with one ship carrying domestic support equipment for a battalion sized Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force. This would be a general purpose configuration to handle missions that have been performed recently such as riot control, fire fighting, and disaster relief. A second ship could be configured with the "MEU Slice"<sup>26</sup> loadout.

It seems that reaching the contingency site quickly would be critical and that ships arriving a week after notification of the crisis are of limited value. More squadrons, perhaps five,

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<sup>25</sup> Charles L. Dunlap, Jr., *The Origins of the Military Coup of 2012*, Paper, National War College, 1992, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> In the "MEU Slice," all equipment comes from one MPS ship, capable of providing 2,700 Marines with fifteen days sustainment.

located near the continental United States would be more useful than the current deployment. A case could be made for a squadron on the Gulf, East, and West Coasts. Two more, possibly in Hawaii and the Azores, would round out this force.

### **Chaos in the Littorals**

Since this scenario has already been discussed at length, there is no need to develop it farther. The slogan of those who hold to this vision might be, "The future looks more like the stepchild of Somalia than the son of Desert Storm." What does Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 look like in this world? That question was answered, appropriately enough, in *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*.

In an attempt to illustrate the utility of maneuver warfare in smaller scale contingencies, *OMFTS* replays the employment of Marines in Somalia, which involved maritime prepositioning ships. The requirement to establish a lodgment ashore in Mogadishu for logistical support in the 1992 relief effort is held up as a serious drawback. Future naval expeditionary forces are ascribed the capability of dispensing with this pause and proceeding directly to multiple objectives inland. It touts that this would result in "speeding relief to those in need and depriving potentially hostile forces of the ability to prepare and effectively react."<sup>27</sup>

This effort by *Operational Maneuver from the Sea* to demonstrate its applicability to military operations other than war inadvertently illuminates a fundamental inconsistency between Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, the concept to which it claims to be subordinate.<sup>28</sup> There is a glaring 'capability versus threat' mismatch here. Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 looks like a superpower power projection capability while

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<sup>27</sup> Loc. Cit.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, "A Concept for Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF 2010): Triad Concept"

OMFTS predicts a low-intensity conflict world. The Marine Corps wants to take a force designed initially to deter Soviet aggression on the flanks of Eurasia, subsequently improved to respond better to major regional conflicts, then enhanced further with more ships, and finally replace it with a MEB sized quasi-amphibious assault force, but would justify it at least in part on the basis of "speeding relief to those in need."

Focusing on getting the force inland more efficiently and obviating the need to build up logistics ashore misses the essential character of 'operations other than war.' The core of the mission in Somalia was to "establish a secure environment" for facilitating humanitarian relief. The Marines can occupy objectives with the ruthless efficiency of a German blitzkrieg, but unless the hodge podge of non-governmental organizations that do the food distribution are ready to adopt OMFTS, then a logistics infrastructure ashore is still required.

This argument does not discount the vulnerability of stockpiles ashore to attack. They pose a lucrative target to any warlord or faction opposed to American forces. With the trend toward the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means, this issue cannot be wished away. The Marine Corps must acquire adequate means of protecting, not only logistical infrastructure from this threat, but its own troops as well.

If there is no superpower competitor at the moment and the requirement to fight two nearly simultaneous *Desert Storms* is being questioned, then why does the Marine Corps need to revolutionize forcible entry operations? The Marine Corps needs a better answer as to why it needs this capability. One has real trouble arriving at Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 from "chaos in the littorals."

A maritime prepositioning force designed around "chaos in the littorals" and hedging its bets on major regional conflict and a distant superpower, looks far different from one designed with the high end threats in mind while hedging its bets on "chaos." Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 looks more like the former than the latter with its "tailored loads" as an afterthought.

If the "worldwide breakdown of order" looks anything like Somalia, then the current level of capability looks adequate. The enhanced maritime prepositioning force falls into the "nice to have" category. The field hospital, joint task force headquarters command and control suite, and naval construction battalion equipment look like especially welcome additions. The remaining extra capabilities are luxuries.

Taking into account the increasing frequency of non-combatant evacuations, one improvement could be made. Those operations in benign environments, which do not require forcible entry by MEUs or special forces, could conceivably be handled by the air contingency MAGTFs. These forces on standby for crisis response could link up with a "MEU slice" maritime prepositioning ship. This would require the Marine Corps practicing and demonstrating to theater CINCs that this is a credible option. Non-combatant evacuations in hostile environments would continue to require MEUs or Army special forces.

### **Major Regional Contingencies**

Although many in Congress no longer view fighting two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts a realistic threat scenario, there are still those who do. In fact a former Secretary of Defense recently published a book where he looked at no less than five.<sup>29</sup> Former Secretary Weinberger lays out fictional accounts of future conflicts occurring later in this decade

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<sup>29</sup> Caspar Weinberger and Peter Schweizer, The Next War, (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1996)

and into the next. He looks at the possibility of a North Korean attack on the South, a nuclear armed Iran launching an Islamic jihad, a multi-division U.S. intervention in Mexico to stem a mass migration, Russia rising out of the ashes and invading western Europe, and a Japan forced down the same path it was in World War II. In the Mexican War scenario the U.S. invades to oust a government whose policies have created a flow across the border at the level of tens of millions. Although Weinberger's main purpose is to make a case for improved theater and national ballistic missile defense capabilities, the book demonstrates that there are serious thinkers who look to the future and see major regional conflicts.

How does Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 look in Weinberger's world? Obviously more useful in some of the five conflicts than others. Against North Korea and Japan the assembly at sea capability would be of great benefit. For attacking the coast of Mexico the Marine Corps could do without it. If the Russians were to come through the Fulda Gap, the Marine Corps is back on the sidelines and flanks such as Norway.

A Persian Gulf War against Iran presents its own special problems for 2010. Operational Maneuver from the Sea, for all its strengths, does not adequately address the mine warfare issue. The confined waters of the Gulf neutralize the stand off distance allowed by an over the horizon capability. Based on the experience of the Gulf War, a forcible entry on the Iranian coast looks problematic. The idea of commercial shipping following an ARG through mines looks ludicrous.

The lack of an assembly at sea capability and the requirement to shore base logistics are not the main problems hindering the rapid build up of combat power ashore--mines are. Rather

than replace the enhanced maritime prepositioning force, money would be better spent on behalf of the squadron at Diego Garcia by adding a floating dry-dock with a flotilla of minesweepers.

The enhanced maritime prepositioning force was crafted based on lessons from CENTCOM in the Gulf War and Somalia. Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 does not achieve its full potential in the constrained environment of the Gulf. An ideal force of this theater is an enhanced maritime prepositioning force with minesweepers in a floating dry-dock.

### **The War After Next: A New Superpower**

The future for the American military is not contained in the Chairman's *Joint Vision 2010*. That military has already been conceptualized, its weapons purchased or under construction, and its doctrine established or evolving. Much of it already exists today. The real military of the future is the one which will come *after* this next one. This force will reflect profound changes in the international security environment and the nature of warfare. The United States, without a serious threat on the near horizon is in a position to contemplate these changes and explore alternative approaches to national security. A missed opportunity in this period of reprieve could be disastrous if this future force is built on the operational concepts and force structure of the 1980's.

These are the principal themes in Paul Bracken's article, "The Military After Next."<sup>30</sup> Although he refrains from making distant predictions about what war and the world will look like beyond 2010, he cautions against thinking about future scenarios in which regional conflict or "operations other than war" predominate. Bracken looked at that possibility of potential for "peer" or "near peer" competitors. While there may be no demonstrable military threat to vital

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Bracken, "The Military After Next," *Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 1993, p. 157-158.

American interests in 1997, prudent military leadership could not ignore its recurrence at some future time. If one was convinced that it was likely to follow "chaos in the littorals," then would Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 still be the vehicle of choice?

If the superpower was a reborn Russian Empire with its eyes once again toward its lost satellites in Europe, then amphibious operations are of marginal importance as discussed previously. Even if the superpower were to be China, still claiming the bulk of the South China Sea, the power projection capability of MPF 2010 may not be the answer. Putting ground forces on the mainland would pit American weakness against Chinese strength. In the nightmare scenario postulated by the sinophobes, an invasion of Taiwan, the situation would have to deteriorate to the point where the island would have to be retaken by force in order for MPF 2010's assembly at sea and tactical offload capability to come into play.

## CHAPTER SIX

### AN ALTERNATIVE FOR THE FUTURE

#### **Joint Vision 2010 and Full Spectrum Trap**

The chairman's *Joint Vision 2010* focuses on "full spectrum dominance" as the key characteristic of the armed forces in the next century.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, he holds that "power projection, enabled by overseas presence, will remain the fundamental strategic concept for our future force."<sup>32</sup> In describing the future "agile organizations" that he wants the services to provide, he dictates that they "must become more responsive to contingencies with less 'startup' time between deployment and employment."<sup>33</sup>

With the dual major regional conflict framework of the "Bottom Up Review" under scrutiny and without a defined threat on which to base strategy and force structure, the services have been left to base requirements on the more nebulous basis of capabilities. Each one claims, of course, the need to possess the capacity to deal with the full spectrum of threats right up to a peer or near peer competitor. While prudent measures should be taken to handle this possibility, it can become an artifice used to inflate requirements.

OMFTS asserts that its techniques "must be of use in a wide variety of situations, ranging from humanitarian relief to a high stakes struggle with a rising superpower." This clearly presupposes Marine forces trained in these techniques and equipped for warfare up to the top end of the conflict spectrum. Unless the use of the dramatic phrase, "high stakes struggle" is hyperbolic, then the drafters of OMFTS foresee the possibility of the United States fighting for its survival, or at least its vital interests. And not against an Iraq or North Korea, but against a

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<sup>31</sup> Joint Vision 2010, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 31.



state or coalition of states on a par with the former Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact Alliance.

While this is not entirely implausible, it certainly takes worst case thinking to the extreme.

How does one get from the military balance in 1997 to a future with Bracken's theoretical construct of a 'peer competitor?' Given that the Russian armed forces appear to be in a poor state of readiness and still declining, only China is left to fill the role of 'rising superpower.' China may indeed someday challenge the United States' political goals of a stable, friendly east Asia not dominated by a single power.

For the Sino-American War scenario to play out, events would have to take a bad turn on all fronts. The United States' policy of "cooperative engagement," which has thus far been successful, would have to fail or be abandoned. The Chinese economy, which by some estimates is only one-eighth the size of Japan's, would have to maintain the current high rates of growth over the next thirty or more years.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Chinese defense expenditures have yet to show any dramatic increase.<sup>35</sup> While defense spending in dollar figures may not give the comprehensive picture of Chinese military capability, it is still instructive that a respectable source ranks China below Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom in this measure.<sup>36</sup> Finally, China would have to acquire a power projection navy equal to at least half the Soviet Navy in its heyday and the will to use it. Neither *Joint Vision 2010* nor *Operational Maneuver from the Sea* make a convincing case for this contrived string of events. They only invoke the imprecise threat of a superpower on the horizon.

### **A Capability in Search of a Threat**

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<sup>34</sup> *Washington Post*, "Japan's Failed Economy," April 9, 1997, A21.

<sup>35</sup> International Institute of Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 1996-1997* (London: Brassey's, 1996), p. 308.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

How would the proponents of MPF 2010 advocate employing it against China? A landing on the mainland? Retaking Taiwan after a successful Chinese invasion? It is difficult to envision amphibious operations on a scale enabled by MPF 2010 in defense of U.S. vital interests as threatened by the China of the sinophobes.

The current MPF 2010 concept of replacing an entire maritime prepositioning fleet of sixteen ships with new ones capable of assembly at sea and tactical offload is inconsistent with any but this most pessimistic vision of the world in thirteen years. In fact, it looks like a thinly veiled attempt on the part of the Marine Corps to regain its long defunct capability of launching multi-division amphibious assaults. This quote from *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond Concept* is most telling: "MPF ships provide the needed strategic lift to partly compensate for the current and future shortfalls in amphibious shipping."<sup>37</sup>

This leaves the distinct impression that what the Marine Corps really wants is additional amphibious shipping beyond the Navy's commitment of that for two and a half Marine Expeditionary Brigade equivalents. An examination of some of the additional required capabilities for MPF 2010 confirms this view. Why else would its writers demand berthing spaces for Marines in transit, "resilient damage control," aircraft handling facilities, and air defense weapons?<sup>38</sup> If one tries to imagine what this set of requirements looks like, it starts to look like an LHD crewed by civilians.

If MPF 2010 fits the description of "a capability in search of a threat," is there a better alternative? Lacking a probable peer competitor and with the receding possibility of a conflict in a major theater of war, conventional wisdom holds that what looms on the horizon is not "China

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<sup>37</sup> *Maritime Prepositioning Force 2010 and Beyond*, pp. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2-11.

on steroids," but more Somalias and Bosnias. The most recent non-combatant evacuation operation in Albania and an impending one in Zaire would appear to validate the Marine Corps prediction of 'chaos in the littorals.'

The Marine Corps should resist focusing on the possible threat option of a peer competitor, especially with regards to China. Although it can be perilous to separate political and military dimensions, it is safe to say that preventing the hegemony of a China, which spends less on its defense than Great Britain, is more a function of finessing the "one China" policy and cooperative engagement than of pursuing an east Asian arms race.<sup>39</sup> Disregarding the possibility of a peer competitor would mean rethinking plans to turn the maritime prepositioning ships into "LHDs crewed by civilians." This rethinking would involve addressing the most likely threat options and responding to three ongoing trends: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and delivery means, increasing demand for smaller scale contingencies such as non-combatant evacuation operations, and stagnant or shrinking defense expenditures.

### **An Alternative for MPF 2010**

During the Gulf War the Marine Corps found its maritime prepositioning forces with insufficient armored assets to defend against further Iraqi moves into Saudi Arabia. This deficiency was corrected after the war by doubling the number of tanks aboard the ships. The Marine Corps may find itself caught short again in the next conflict, but not against enemy tanks, but rather against incoming missiles carrying chemical and biological agents.

Since the Gulf War there is a growing recognition that the United States holds an unchallenged edge in conventional warfare. Potential adversaries are apt not to play to its

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<sup>39</sup> International Institute of Strategic Studies, p. 308.

strengths as Saddam Hussein did, but to attack in areas where it is most vulnerable. Chemical and biological warfare comes quickly to mind.

The Marine Corps has a weapon that can provide theater missile defense, one that compares favorably in this role to the Army's Patriot system. The weapon is the HAWK missile, but the Marine Corps has been in the process of decreasing its numbers, if not eliminating it altogether. The Marine Corps needs to re-form a second active light anti-aircraft battalion of HAWK missiles and put battalion equipment sets on all three maritime prepositioning force squadrons. This may require trade-offs for other equipment, but the additional capability is vital.

The proliferation of smaller scale contingencies or what *OMFTS* called the "worldwide breakdown of order" is another trend which MPF 2010 must give more careful consideration. The Marine Corps response thus far has been the 'special purpose Marine air-ground task force (SPMAGTF), a task-organized force with less capability in some component than the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). While the Marine Corps has formed SPMAGTFs for specific missions, there has also been a process of creating de facto SPMAGTFs. Most recently this has occurred with the MEU in the Mediterranean. It has been split into one component ready for further unrest in the Adriatic and another off the coast of Zaire in anticipation of a non-combatant evacuation operation.

Given that this trend of 'failed states' continues unabated, the National Command Authorities will require more forces capable of evacuating non-combatants in both benign and hostile environments. Rather than render the MEU incapable of performing forcible entry by detaching parts of it, the MPF 2010 needs to develop a credible capability for dealing with 'chaos in the littorals.' This involves resuscitating and marketing the moribund air contingency force.

At present this reinforced battalion-sized contingency force is viewed with varying degrees of seriousness. Often units assigned to it are allowed to deploy for training at bases distant from their home stations.

One solution to the fracturing of the MEU would be to certify the air contingency force for non-combatant evacuations in benign environments. Annual maritime prepositioning force exercises would include deploying the force and rehearsing this mission using the "MEU slice" tailored load ship. If the Marine Corps does not address this problem soon, it risks dissipating the unique capabilities of the MEU and having Army Special Forces units encroach on this conventional mission.

The last trend that MPF 2010 must contend with is stagnant or declining spending on national defense. Without a clear, defining threat, this trend is likely to continue. Most pundits see the Army as the biggest loser in any further force reductions. The Army, however, is in the process of reinventing itself. Army battalions and brigades already find themselves increasingly involved in rotating overseas for deployments in Bosnia and Kuwait.

The Army will become more expeditionary as it develops the kinds of forces called for in *Joint Vision 2010*. As it does so, it will look more like the Marine Corps. It will infringe on the middle ground of providing sustainable, mid-capability deployable forces that it ceded to the Marine Corps during the Cold War. The Marine Corps will find itself caught between Special Operations Forces such as the Army Rangers from the unconventional operations side of the spectrum, and from more easily deployable Army units on the other. The challenge for the Marine Corps here is to preserve its naval expeditionary character while demonstrating competencies more relevant to 2010 than a division-size amphibious landing.

## **Sea Dragon**

This brings the analysis back to the vignette which opened the paper. MPF 2010 needs to specifically address what a Sea Dragon type force needs in the way of follow-on units and their prepositioned equipment. The next "wargame," with an urban focus could be the most challenging. Are highly dispersed small units, even those able to call in precise fires from remote locations, the best force for operations in urban areas, operations which are usually manpower intensive and can entail heavy casualties?

Urban areas cannot always be bypassed in small scale contingencies where the mission involves 'establishing a secure environment.' Even small third world cities such as Mogadishu can necessitate tens of thousands of troops. Additionally, recent experience in Somalia indicates that urban areas cannot always be shunted onto the back of a coalition partner. Other nations can augment with the general purpose light infantry necessary, but American forces still provide core units which galvanize the other participants.

Unless the operating environment for the Sea Dragon force in Operation Urban Warrior is a realistic one, the above points may be missed. If factors such as coalition forces, civilian refugees, non-governmental organizations, and warlords are not part and parcel of the battlefield but are merely distractions, any results from this exercise will be suspect. Controlling civil disturbances caused by large crowds is a difficult mission with which small dispersed units will find it difficult to cope.

Peace enforcement operations are a clear example of small scale contingencies requiring a lot of presence on the ground. The point here is that MPF 2010 must not compromise its robust size in favor of an assembly at sea and tactical offload capability. Why is this an either or

proposition? The potential pitfall exists that constrained resources, coupled with a false read on the outcome of Urban Warrior could lead to accepting a smaller sized maritime prepositioning force in exchange for fewer, more capable ships.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

#### **Final Thoughts**

A candid assessment of OMFTS and MPF 2010 reveals an inconsistency in the threat environment of the former and the capabilities of the latter. Within the range of plausible futures the Marine Corps vision of 'chaos in the littorals' looks more prescient every day. MPF 2010 should devise a force designed for the continued high frequency of these contingency operations while hedging its bet on the possibility of conflicts in a major theater of war or worse.

The first step in doing so is abandoning the requirement for a quasi-amphibious capability inherent in MPF 2010. This does not mean, however, allowing any further reduction in amphibious lift. What it does mean is that the current size of the amphibious force gives the nation adequate forcible entry capability for the future described in *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*.

The Marine Corps replaces its current fleet of MPF ships at its peril. To do so risks ending up with less squadrons, fewer ships, or both. The enhanced maritime prepositioning force can adequately handle the future described in OMFTS. The course consistent with the most likely threat environment in 2010 would be to purchase or renew the leases on the ships.

Any extra effort should be directed not toward compensating for ostensible shortfalls in amphibious shipping. If the Marine Corps is really serious about 'chaos in the littorals' it will augment force protection against missiles carrying chemical or biological warheads by acquiring additional HAWK units and assets. Otherwise it risks finding itself with the wrong force mix as it did in the Gulf War with its lack of tanks, but with far graver consequences. If the Marine



Corps is really serious about hedging its bets on conflict in a major theater of war, it will address the mine countermeasures shortcomings which contributed to, if not caused, the cancellation of the amphibious assault in the Gulf War. Finally, the Marine Corps can potentially double its ability to perform non-combatant evacuation operations by upgrading the capability of the air contingency forces and marrying them up with the MEU slice ship organic to each MPSRON.

If 'chaos in the littorals' is more than a catchy "bumper sticker" phrase, then MPF 2010 must prepare for it. Otherwise, the Marine Corps, like the British Army of the interwar period, will find its operational effectiveness hampered by its attachment to concepts from the past.

## APPENDIX A

### ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>AAAV</b>	Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle
<b>ACE</b>	Air Combat Element
<b>APA</b>	Army Prepositioning Afloat
<b>ARG</b>	Amphibious Ready Group
<b>EAF</b>	Expeditionary Airfield
<b>FIE</b>	Fly-in Echelon
<b>MEF</b>	Marine Expeditionary Force
<b>MEU</b>	Marine Expeditionary Unit
<b>MPF</b>	Maritime Prepositioning Force
<b>MPSRON</b>	Maritime Prepositioning Squadron
<b>MRS</b>	Mobility Requirements Study
<b>NCF</b>	Naval Construction Forces
<b>NTPF</b>	Near Term Prepositioning Force
<b>OMFTS</b>	Operational Maneuver from the Sea
<b>OPP</b>	Offload Preparation Party
<b>RDJTF</b>	Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
<b>SPMAGTF</b>	Special Purpose Marine Corps Air Ground Task Force

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